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MAKE FRIENDS WITH NATURE

Mayan Revelation Number 210

Meet Nature

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BELOVED CENTURION:

I told you some time ago that in a future lesson we would take up the study of Nature and its importance in our character growth as Mayans. That time has come, and since it is among my most favorite subjects, there is much I would like to say about its bearing on your life.

Nature is so close to God - in fact, Nature is God at work. The laws of Nature are the thoughts of God, and it is a firm belief of your Instructor that the man or woman who lives close to and loves Nature and understands it, is not likely ever to make a failure of life.

I never cease to be awed by the mystery of Nature, the glory of it, the consistency of it, for no matter what happens, it is always there, it cannot be held back. It breaks through every obstacle and pushes forward, and eventually makes itself a way. If you will remember, we used on the cover of our magazine, D. M., a picture of a lone tree growing out of a rock. It had found itself a way.

Many great doctors, surgeons, and other professional men find their relaxation by getting close to Nature, working in gardens, and in this way they are able to throw off the tenseness of the day and renew their spirit.

I believe it was Longfellow who said, "If thou art worn and hard beset with sorrows that thou wouldst forget, if thou wouldst read a lesson that will keep thy heart from failing and thy soul from sleep, go to the woods and hills; no tears dim the sweet look that Nature wears."

I was strongly reminded of this while visiting a famous woods known as Muir's Woods in California, just a few miles from San Francisco. Those great and glorious trees were like a cathedral; in fact, some clusters had the name of "The Cathedral". The mastery of God's work was awe-inspiring, and as I gazed at the height and wonder of these trees, it came to my mind to wonder how anyone could possibly doubt the existence of God with such proof of His greatness on all sides.

Another wonderful example of Nature was seen in these same woods. Some of the trees had been damaged by fire, the origin of which was a mystery. And some of the other trees close by came to the rescue and formed "crutches" to take the place of the parts of the trees which were damaged. It was indeed a wonderful sight. And looking at God's wonderful handiwork planted the desire in one's heart to try to be a better person, and also to be filled with gratitude for the privilege of living in a world where so much beauty exists.

I have known people who could be surrounded by the beauty of Nature - mountains with beautiful sunrises peeping over the peaks in the morning as the day starts, and at the close of the day with the glory of the sunset as God painted His last picture of the day; - I have seen people look at these things and not even see them, their understanding of Nature was so incomplete. I knew a young woman who rode all the way to California for the first time, over the mountains and the desert, and never took her eyes off a magazine she was reading.

These people are poor indeed.

One of the purposes of this lesson is to help you to appreciate more the wonders of Nature. It is sometimes a rather human thing to take Nature for granted, just accept all these beautiful things and never stop to think what brings them about, and their effect on our lives.

The Prologue to your lesson is getting long, so let us proceed with the truths which follow by repeating the following prayer:

PRAYER

Give me insight, Heavenly Father, to realize how wonderfully and universally Thou hast revealed Thyself in Nature, and help me to absorb the spirit and meaning of that revelation. Amen.

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MAKE FRIENDS WITH NATURE

Meet Nature You have a friend you may not always notice or often think much about, yet who is one of the greatest and best among your friends. She feeds you, clothes you, shelters you, beautifies your dwellingplace and its surroundings, and speaks to you in countless voices including that of silence. Her name is Nature. She never intrudes on you, yet she is always near and at your service. She is never meddlesome, but always helpful. Her countless gifts and services bring only happiness and welfare when rightly used. She will not force her friendship on you, yet you could not get along without it. She will not insist on yours, but she deserves it.

Do you love beauty and long for it in the midst of the drabness of life? Nature is the author and provider of it. She designs the sunsets, paints the landscapes, and fashions the flowers. She times the seasons and maintains their cycle. She keeps the stars in balance as they move in their incalculable courses. She puts the glow of health and the smile of happiness on human faces. She has arranged countless touches of loveliness and comfort for us to discover as we go. You can look nowhere without seeing some of her arrangements for your happiness.

Do you want security? Nature gives us a security far beyond anything man can win or achieve for himself. We could not have come this far, indeed we could not even have started on the way without her supporting arms, her aid in every time of need, and her constant care. She prepared the way for our coming and nursed us in our infancy. She walks with us through the years of calm and storm, and smooths the pillows for our rest. We owe her our gratitude, for even a good friend can do more for us when we know and appreciate the gifts bestowed.

Do you desire and appreciate health? Nature has more curative knowledge to impart than have all learned men combined. Every moment of our lives she is conquering some disease, preventing the attacks of others, building new tissues and repairing old ones, driving away danger, and making places fit to inhabit and life safe to live. She can sometimes use a little help and cooperation, but without her aid before and since we were born there would be nothing to aid. Her aim is our complete well being.

Do you want wisdom? She will patiently teach you mysteries only the wise have unraveled and give you hints of others they have yet to discover. Where did Galileo, Copernicus, Bacon, Newton, Einstein, and the rest, learn their wisdom? In the treasure houses of Nature. They brought open, searching minds, and she whispered these things to them. Some are revelations of how the universe was made and must be developed. Others are hints of what we must do to keep life safe and good in a changing age. She waits to tell you. She has nothing to hide.

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Nature's Scope We cannot possibly do justice here to the vastness of the known scope of Nature, but we may suggest a general idea. Our galaxy of stars, the Milky Way, is considered about 100,000 light years across, a light year being the distance light can travel in a year at its rate of 186,000 miles a second, amounting to a little less than six trillion miles. Millions of similar galaxies are known to exist, to say nothing of unknown space beyond them. The single star Betelgeuse, in the constellation of Orion, is so vast that if it were in the position of our sun the orbit of the earth would be far inside of it. This is but a part of Nature's reach.

As Nature includes things infinitely large it also includes things infinitely small. The 200 inch telescope is matched by the new electronic microscope, which also penetrates only a fraction of the possible field. We now deal with things so small that we only know they are there because we see microscopically the traces of their tracks. Nothing is too large or small for Nature's attention.

Nature is as infinite in her reach of duration as she is in her reach of distance and size. The human mind cannot comprehend the stretch of time, to say nothing of eternity, either backward or forward. We only get dizzy when we try to attempt it. It is well enough that we cannot conceive a beginning or an end, for they reach into infinity. But they are not too great for Nature, for in her we have a friend who is timeless. Her protection and care are not limited to mere lifetimes or ages; they are forever. Her friendly care is like the cliffs she has carved and the seas she has dug. There is nothing temporary or uncertain about her plans.

But that is not all Nature brings to play upon the field of life that is not measured in distance, size, or time, but only in meaning and value. She teaches us the wonder of joy, the worth of understanding, the thrill of affection; and she provides and maintains the facilities by which they operate. How do they get into our lives? Mostly through the senses, which she has provided also. How

marvelous is the wonder of the eye, the ear, and the senses of taste, smell, and touch! How could we get on without them? How, then, could we get on without her, even if it were possible for us to be here without her at all?

All this has been said to make it plain that you are allying yourself with nothing small or insignificant when you become a friend of Nature, who is already a friend of yours. On the contrary, you enlarge your life to bounds beyond your comprehension and enrich it beyond all human standards of measure. You are no more without a visible association you can know with the senses as well as the spirit, for you give yourself the wisest and most inspired of tangible companions. You make friends with a universal healer who not only binds up your own wounds, but who even covers the scars and hurts of the world with life and beauty, covering with flowers and vines everything from a wounded tree to a battlefield.

As Bryant has written, she "glides into your darker musings with a mild and healing sympathy that steals away their sharpness e'er you are aware." Of all this you make yourself the companion and the student when you make friends with Nature.

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And It Was Are you familiar with Wordsworth's poem, Peter Bell? If you are
Nothing More not, it would reward you well to read it and consider its message.
If you are familiar with it, please remember and think it over again now. It is about a man who was so casual in his living and so unconcerned about what he passed on his daily rounds that he found in things no meanings to think about and profit by. For instance, "A primrose by the river's brim a yellow primrose was to him, and it was nothing more." He lived a life of spiritual poverty because he did not open his soul to the meanings of the wonderful things he experienced and that were about him everywhere. His is a large and pitiful following.

There is a word of Holy Writ about this too. It refers to those who, "Having eyes see not, and having ears hear not." They can look at the stars, the clouds, the trees, and the faces of children, and not really see them. They can get passing impressions of the singing winds, or the sound of human voices, and never really hear them. The impressions stop somewhere short of the soul, so a rainbow or the sound of music never thrills them. They miss much more than they see or hear, and where they leave off becomes the measure of their lives; for only the meanings that thrill and nourish us become our own. The friends of Nature do not suffer this poverty.

We cannot put into life any meaning that we do not first discover. We have to acquire the habit of finding the deep meanings in things, facts, and experiences, and appreciate them for what they are and not merely for what they casually appear to be. If Peter Bell had done that with the primrose he would have seen the wonder and glory of earth and heaven in it. They were there, as they are in both the greatest and the humblest works of creation. Having eyes, he saw not, and so he became a participater in the great tragedy of life, the extent and value of the things we miss. People who do this with the gifts of

Nature are likely to do it also with the experiences and blessings of life.

The person who sees only the surface appearances of Nature does so because he has not yet learned the secret and rewards of the deeper look, the look of interest and of faith which helps to make this wonderful life so much more wonderful yet. On the other hand, people who learn how wonderful even the common things about them are naturally apply the same appreciative understanding to life itself. Those who do not see the wonder in the relationship of friends, neighbors and family, are likely to be the very people to whom a morning walk, a holiday ramble, or a session with the winds and stars, means a passing impression and no more. The Peter Bells of the world are numbered by them.

Have you ever had a squirrel play hide and go seek with you, or had a bird perch itself near you and speak and when you answered its chirp sing you a song, or had a wild thing of the woods test you for good will and then go a piece with you as you walked on? God's creatures will do that if you convince them of your good will. It is not natural for them to be hostile or afraid when anyone sees the divinity in them, like John Muir who called them "our horizontal friends."

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The World is Too Much With Us What is the reason there are so many Peter Bells who never see the wonder beneath the surface of things? Wordsworth, who delighted in Nature, answers that question in another poem beginning, "The world is too much with us. Late and soon, getting and spending we lay waste our powers. Little we see in Nature that is ours." Too intense absorption in material things and superficial interests tends to dull our perception of that part of life which is eternal by subduing our interest in it. We neglect the things we could take with us in our concern to acquire the things we cannot. The material world has its place, but it is only a bridge to something more abiding.

There is a way to spiritualize the temporal interest and make it a lifting influence instead of a down-dragging one. We have only to make the material secondary to the deeper and higher meanings in things. The value of the zeros in a number depends on how far you keep them away from first place. Put in first place they almost destroy it, while in last place they multiply it. Try that with the values of life, and see how the temporary phases yield place to the significant ones like the glory and wonder in created things.

Nature is a faithful servant of mankind. Our greatest blessings are adaptations of some one or more of her phases or functions to our needs. For instance, electricity, or any of the great protections against disease, or the many contributions to knowledge, remind us that the men who have accomplished these things have been not only great scientists but also great lovers of Nature. We learn best what we love most, so Nature has opened her valuable secrets most readily to those who loved her best; but her book of wonders is closed to those who, like Peter Bell, have eyes but do not see.

In saying "The world is too much with us," Wordsworth means that the world is too near to us and means too much to us to let us walk very closely with Nature. The closer to his eyes one holds two silver dollars the less of anything else he can see, but the farther away he moves them the more comes into view around and beyond them. It is so with the world of ordinary things and interests. The more we tend to put it first, the less of the more abiding things, like Nature, we can see around and beyond it.

George Washington Carver, lover of Nature, asked the sweet potato and the peanut how many things of value they could give mankind. He had asked God for more, but had finally narrowed it down to these. Before he was through he had built more than three hundred valuable products from the peanut and a similar number from the sweet potato. For no one but one of her affectionate friends would Nature have done so much, and probably for no one but a lover of the God whose handmaiden she is.

With every great human advancement it has been the same. Of every great new development we find the pattern somewhere in Nature. For every great advancement she sets the pace. But her gifts are for blessing and not for destruction.

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Influence One of the greatest things about any friendship is the influence one friend has on another. It is so great that one who takes a friend is never the same again. When you form such a tie you let yourself in for a transformation, and friendship with Nature is no exception. In fact, Nature's influence is greater, because she herself is so great, and friendship with her is so telling and constant. It is a force that pervades us, develops us, carries us forward, and blesses us with her nature, purpose, and work.

This is true because the tendency of friendship is to make friends ever more like each other. They share each other's thoughts, ideas, purposes, desires, and outlooks, till they become similar in action and personality. Like pebbles rolling together down a stream or at the bottom of a moving glacier, and gradually wearing each other to the same shape, two personalities gradually bring each other into the same way of thinking and living, in many cases even into physical resemblance. That is what makes it so important what friends we choose, accept, and have for associates.

In Geology there is a process called erosion. It is the process by which mountains and hills weather, wear down, and fill up the valleys at their feet, so that the whole landscape always approaches a common level. As a prophet said long ago, every valley is exalted and every mountain and hill is brought low. Something like that happens to people also. Mind wears upon mind, spirit on spirit, and manner on manner, under the influence of friendship, so that a common level is approached and finally reached. This is as true in our friendship with Nature as in that with each other. So strong and good a force could make for any of us a tremendous influence for the better.

It is no little thing when you make a friend, nor is it any less a thing when you make friends with Nature. Moreover, your association with her will never bring you anything but happiness and good. No one ever had cause to regret it.

We can easily see that the influence of a friend affects our manners and conduct, but that is only the surface indication. It is so only because the level of action has been affected. This, however, is only the effect of a yet deeper cause. It comes about because the power released has penetrated to the depth of character. Think what it can mean to character, and therefore to personality, for the clean genuineness and great power of much association with so great a friend to have reached the inner sources of one's life and given them the glory of the sunshine, the depth of the sea, the peace of the starlight, and the patience of ages.

There is an old story about a man who had lived a most fortunate and favored life. When asked to explain it he simply said, "I had a friend." There had been someone who walked with him much, never counseled him wrongly, nor set a bad example, nor exerted an unwholesome influence; someone whose influence had always been elevating, helpful, and inspiring. Such a friend is Nature. She has so much of the sublime to share with us that what is ordinary in us tends to fade away.

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Nature's Teachings Bryant's poem, *Thanatopsis*, written in his later teens before, as Wordsworth says, the shades of the prison house began to close upon him, is about the appreciation and understanding of Nature as a teacher. In it he says, "Go forth under the open sky and list to Nature's teachings." It pays us to develop the habit of doing that, for Nature is a teacher who is, as all true teachers are, a friend. We cannot here even hint at all the wise and valuable lessons she has to teach us, but we will mention a few of the immortal things she has taught the many who have waited with her to learn them. These are intended merely to suggest how many others she has to impart, and how great is their importance.

First, Nature is a teacher of truth. That is the treasure the philosophers, prophets, and scientists of the world are always trying to find and share with us. Each has his special approach, but all are to the same center. Nature, however, has a grasp that covers all these approaches. Whatever we learn from her is true, and can be used as a test for all we learn from other sources. If she could be mistaken about anything she would not be Nature. She alone has mastered all that is meant by the phrase, "whatsoever things are true."

Second, being a teacher of truth, Nature is also a teacher of honesty and sincerity, both of which are closely related. Nature never deceives anyone or makes the suggestion of false pretense. She always appears what she is and is what she appears. She is the same at all times and in all circumstances. She does not need to pretend. A mask would make her seem less than she is. A world life built by her principles would rest on sure foundations.

Third, being a teacher of truth, Nature is also a teacher of order. All her materials are exactly right. They fit and work together. They are in balance and hold steady. The orbits of her stars, the cycle of her ages, the procession of her seasons, never get out of place or balance. Those who come to know her keep their lives in order, and leave disorder to those who are less wise. How much it would mean to a world of turmoil if more and more of us learned from Nature the way of order, which is a way of peace, as well as a way of strength and power!

Fourth, as anyone can look about him and see, Nature is a teacher of beauty. Wherever you find her she is at work, and what she is doing is either to create beauty or overcome ugliness. That is because her thoughts and purposes are beautiful, and whatever she does or makes follows the pattern. A great trouble with the human race is the amount of ugliness that gets into its thinking and actions. Walking with and learning from Nature tends to do away with all that. Enough of doing so would build a beautiful age and a beautiful world. If you do not think so, look at the flower she holds up for you to see, the sky she spreads over you and the grass she stretches beneath your feet, the dawn and sunset she paints for you, and try to make the fruits of your thoughts, words, and deeds, beautiful too.

Nature rings no school bells, keeps no records, makes no charges, and issues no diplomas. Her school is for all. You have but to go, and watch, and hear.

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**Friendship in
a World of Miracle** Years ago a certain nature-loving professor in a certain college was sending out every year a group of young graduates who had been taught to see and appreciate the wonder in the works of Nature all around them. He did his teaching from that point of view, and brought his students into as much actual contact with Nature as possible. Above the door of his classroom was lettered a motto which hundreds of students remembered through life. It reminded the reader that the friend of Nature is always in the midst of miracle. It was, "Study the Laws of Nature, for They are the Laws of God."

We all live miraculous lives in a miraculous world. We are miracles, we are surrounded by miracles, and we work with miracles all the time. Your yard and garden are full of miracles. Every river, glacier, or mountain, is a miracle. So is every hair on your head, organ in your body, emotion you feel, or thought you think. Every blade of grass you tread on is a miracle, so is the air you breathe, the food you eat, the water you drink, and the processes by which your body uses them. Nature, you see, is the Great Magician.

It is said that a miracle is something supernatural, but what is the supernatural? It is merely the yet unknown reaches of the natural. What we know we call natural. What we do not know we call supernatural, but each thing we learn about it we add to what we call natural. A comet was once considered supernatural. A television set would certainly have been. All we know and all we do

not know is really natural, and all nature is miraculous. You see, friendship with Nature is really association with the wonder-working powers of the universe, so it would be a strange ingratitude to think of them as unimportant, wouldn't it?

Some years ago the newspapers announced that a certain unbelieving man proposed to put the idea of God to the test. He would go into an open space in the woods on a certain morning and challenge God to perform a miracle, which if God would do he would become a believer. He went to that spot on the appointed morning, and dared God to perform a miracle. Nothing unusual happened, so, never realizing that the usual is as miraculous as the unusual is, he stalked out and told the world that he had finally proved that God does not exist. Yet all the while the miracle wind had whispered in the tops of the miracle trees, and the miracle sun had shone from the miracle sky on the miracle grass over which trod the man who did not know a miracle when he saw one.

What we have been trying to say in all this is, make friends with Nature, and if you have done so already, strengthen the bond and use the friendship. She will always instruct and inspire while she entertains you. She will always up-build, and never degrade you. She will always welcome and never fail you. Why be downcast when she has unfailing cheer for you, or be bored when she always has something interesting to tell you. Everywhere you turn she has a new picture to show you or a new story to tell you; and more and more you will discover that when you walk with her you will be walking very near to God.

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AFFIRMATION

I realize that Nature is a great and good friend who is always within reach, and my life is daily enriched by that sacred relationship on which I know God has smiled.

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Blessings,

Your Instructor.